SCANDAL AND NARRATIVE IN THE *HEPTAMÉRON*

Abstract

This article explores the relationships between scandal and narrative in Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*. Scandal was a controversial and shifting keyword in the sixteenth century: the medieval secular connotations of socially reprehensible behaviour and outrage were still current, while Protestant discussions revived its biblical sense of the stumbling block in an individual's path to salvation. The *Heptaméron* contains both kinds of scandal. Its stories are socially scandalous in their plots of adultery, treachery, and hypocrisy, but the storytellers also probe the theological idea that such behaviour could be a spiritual snare or stumbling block, especially in relation to what is presented frequently as the false teaching of the Franciscans. This article traces the dynamics of scandal in the *nouvelles* and between the storytellers, and argues that stories about scandalous behaviour might themselves constitute a scandal to the unwary reader. The *Heptaméron* acknowledges this possibility, exploring both the narrative of scandal and the scandal of narrative and emphasising the contagious power of both.

In his 1559 edition of the *Heptaméron*, the Parisian translator Claude Gruget's *nouvelle* 11 is a rather flimsy tale about an itinerant Franciscan preacher whose lewd and equivocal sermons surprise and offend his congregation.[1] Visiting a village in Touraine to preach Advent and

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[1] Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. by Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani (Paris: Livre de poche 'Classique', 1999), pp. 701-5; this will be the edition of reference. Claude Gruget's edition has recently been re-edited: Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. by Nicole

Lent, the Franciscan seeks to compensate for his lack of learning by entertaining the villagers with tales ('comptes') of dubious decency (p. 701). On Maundy Thursday, stimulated by the more elegant attire of the townswomen of Amboise come to hear the sermon, he launches into an ill-advised riff on the Jewish Passover meal – a sacrificial animal roasted and eaten after nightfall – by assuring the ladies that he will teach them what it's like to eat raw meat at night ('manger de la chair crue de nuict', p. 702), following this up with other obscene suggestions. The reaction of his congregation is instructive. The men of Amboise are at first offended; but once they get the measure of the preacher, they become scornful. 'Les jeunes hommes […] commencerent à s'en scandaliser. Mais, après qu'ils l'eurent escouté davantage, ils convertirent le scandale en risée' (p. 702). Encouraged and emboldened by their laughter, the Franciscan continues in this vein through the rest of Holy Week, concluding triumphantly with a joke about making a girl pregnant.

This tale is apocryphal and, as Nicole Cazauran argues, its obscene allusions separate it from the rest of the tales. I nevertheless want to use it as a way to explore the problem of scandal, in particular its relationship to the storytelling enterprise undertaken in the *Heptaméron*. Gruget's edition was how most sixteenth-century readers encountered the text and it seems particularly interested in the dynamics of scandal: another of the substituted tales, N44 (also told by Nomerfide), remarks on how unfounded scandal provokes rather than

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Cazauran and Sylvie Lefèvre (Paris: Gallimard 'Folio', 2000), N11, pp. 162-4. The *nouvelle* in question does not feature in any manuscript of the *Heptaméron*, and replaces the more well-known scatological tale of Mme de Roncex exposed in a Franciscan privy. Both stories are told by Nomerfide. Cazauran notes that the obscene jokes in the substituted story 'ne sont pas du tout dans la manière de Marguerite de Navarre' (p. 642).

censures disapproved behaviour.[2] At least one sixteenth-century reader thought 'scandale' was the principal concern of Gruget's N11: the humanist Henri Estienne refers to it in his *Apologie pour Herodote* as an example of priests using the language of the brothel in the pulpit, commenting that the Franciscan 'ne se soucioit guere du scandale qu'il donnoit par ses propos lascifs'.[3] As Estienne's insistence on priestly propriety suggests, scandal was not just a moral and social problem in the sixteenth century but also a theological one; scandal could indicate the public uproar at a bad example, but it was also a stumbling block on an individual's spiritual path, or the lure in a trap to entice the unwary, the naïve, or the malicious from the way to salvation.[4] While the *Heptaméron* itself may seem to traffic in precisely the scandalous stories the Franciscan offers, it also crucially provides a reflection on the consequences of scandal for its protagonists and storytellers in the discussions that follow.

The prominence of scandal in the *Heptaméron* is notably absent from its principal model, Boccaccio's *Decameron*: while the French text contains fifteen occurrences of *scandale* and its cognates, the Italian text has only five of *scandalo*.[5] Both secular and

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[2] '[L]es personnes de maintenant se scandalisent beaucoup plustost que l'occasion ne leur en est donnée' (p. 707).

[3] Henri Estienne, *Traité preparative à l'Apologie pour Herodote*, ed. by Bénédicte Boudou, 2 vols (Geneva: Droz, 2007), vol. 2, p. 821 (ch. 36).

[4] On these two meanings of the biblical Greek *skandalon*, from the two Hebrew terms it translates – *michsol* (stumbling block) and *mokesh* (snare) – see William Barclay, *New Testament Words* (London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 255-8.

[5] See Suzanne Hanon, *Le Vocabulaire de 'L'Heptaméron' de Marguerite de Navarre: Index et concordance* (Paris, Geneva: Champion-Slatkine, 1990) and the online concordance at Decameron Web: https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/concordance.php [accessed

theological senses of scandal are present, I will argue, in the *Heptaméron* as a whole, and they interact particularly clearly in Gruget's tale; we lose his explicit discussion of scandal and its consequences in focusing on the *Heptaméron*'s manuscript tradition. The monk's bawdy anecdotes and jokes deliberately provoke his congregation's sense of decency and decorum – 'vous, qui vous scandalisez pour moins que rien' (p. 703) is almost a taunt – while Oisille, in discussing the *nouvelle*, condemns him as a theological scandal, an enticement to sin, and more specifically a seducer of women: 'qui renversoit le sens du texte à son plaisir, pensant […] impudemment à suborner les pauvres femmelettes' (p. 704). Oisille's maternal concern for these women suggests that they are most at risk from the scandal of the preacher's sermons; while their men laugh, women may not be able to defuse the threat so easily. The preacher's perverse reading of scripture for his own sinful ends prompts Oisille to depict him as another in the line of lecherous and dangerous Franciscans who provide some of the *Heptaméron*'s most scandalous stories. Nomerfide's comment on his behaviour – 'il feit venir le scandale à propos' (p. 703) – recalls the gospel warning in Matthew and Luke, 'malheureux est lhome par lequel sca[n]dale aduient'.[6] The incongruity of the preacher's obscene jokes in the church amounts to a dereliction of duty: Nomerfide concludes her tale with the reminder that preaching should promote 'l'erudition de son prochain' (p. 704), the

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26 April 2017]. In the *Heptaméron*, 'scandale' and its cognates appear in N9 (p. 150), N21 (p. 303 twice), N25 (p. 371 twice), N26 (p. 389), N33 (p. 432), N41 (pp. 486, 487 twice), N44 (p. 512), N45 (p. 517), N59 (p. 603), N72 (pp. 693, 695). In addition, Gruget's edition contains five more occurrences: N11 (ed. Cazauran, pp. 162, 163 twice), N21 (p. 266), N44 (p. 428).

[6] Matt. 18:7; see also Luke 17:1. Bible references come from Lefèvre d'Etaples's French translation: *La Saincte Bible en francoys […]* (Antwerp: Martin Lempereur, 1530), New Testament, p. vii[v].

spiritual edification of the community which is the converse of scandal in Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Romans, and one particular benefit of the *Heptaméron* according to Gruget.[7]

But scandal, even when it is recognized as such, is a slippery and contagious thing, and it infects even the storytellers themselves. Simontault brings the discussion to an unprecedented level of obscene allusion when he suggests that the preacher 'eust volontiers lavé son… nommeray-je? Non, mais vous m'entendez bien' (p. 705; Simontault's lewd suggestion is one reason why Nicole Cazauran dismisses the *nouvelle* as inauthentic). Compounding his error of decency, Simontault blames the dishonourable monk in the story who led him astray ('m'a ainsi faict esgarer'), and makes Nomerfide, the storyteller, share the responsibility for his transgression, as she points out: '[vous] me faictes participer à vostre coulpe'. Scandal here multiplies and pulls fresh participants into its ambit, as the tale itself is presented as a potential scandal, a lure that 'faict esgarer' from the right path.[8] In addition to being *about* scandalous incidents, the *nouvelle* can embody scandal itself. In what follows, I want to trace both the narrative of scandal and the scandal of narrative in the tales and discussions of Marguerite de Navarre's storytellers, paying particular attention to this contagious aspect of scandal and of stories.

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[7] *L'Heptameron des novvelles* (Paris: pour Vincent Sertenas, 1559), 'A […] ma dame Ieanne de Foix': 'la Royne, […] en se ioüant sur les actes de la vie humaine, a laissé si belles instructions, qu'il n'y a celuy, qui n'y trouue matiere d'erudition' (pp. a ii^{r-v}).

[8] For Calvin, scandals are 'tous empeschemens qui nous font esgarer du droict chemin': obstacles and seducers. Jean Calvin, *Des Scandales*, ed. by Olivier Fatio (Geneva: Droz, 1984), p. 55. Erasmus's definition of scandal is an obstacle: *Paraphrase on Matthew*, trans. by Dean Simpson, *Collected Works of Erasmus* 45 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), ch. 18, p. 260 n. 6.

Snares and stumbling blocks

Given renewed currency by Protestant discussions and its adoption as a polemical tool by Luther and Calvin, scandal was a controversial and shifting sixteenth-century keyword.[9] Early Protestants' emphasis on Paul as a crucial conduit of Christian thought revealed the threat of scandal to a fledgling church, as Paul's engagement with the problem of novelty and bad example in the young Christian communities of Rome and Corinth provided a model for embattled Protestants in Germany, France and Geneva.[10] For the new Protestant communities of the sixteenth century, scandal bodied forth the predestined fate of an individual: affective reactions to the doctrines of the redemption, grace, and free will – indignation or humility – were marks of damnation or salvation. Thomas Aquinas had theorized scandal much earlier in the *Summa Theologiae*, where it is crucially an *occasion* for sin, rather than a cause; it is thus the emotional reaction of the scandalized person that ultimately determines whether scandal leads to a spiritual fall. Aquinas also established an influential taxonomy of scandal in which responsibility was apportioned: an active scandal is a deliberate attempt, whether through bad example, sin, or false teaching, to provoke sin, whereas a passive scandal is one

[9] See Emily Butterworth and Rowan Tomlinson, 'Scandal', in *Renaissance Keywords*, ed. by Ita Mac Carthy (Oxford: Legenda, 2013), pp. 81-100. For a compelling exploration of the theological developments in scandal, see Anne-Pascale Pouey-Mounou, *Panurge comme lard en pois: Paradoxe, scandale, et propriété dans le 'Tiers Livre'* (Geneva: Droz, 2013), especially pp. 95-140. For a discussion of Luther's polemical use of scandal, see Antónia Szabari, 'The Scandal of Religion: Luther and Public Speech in the Reformation', in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, ed. by Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 122-36.

[10] See Olivier Fatio's introduction to Calvin's *Des Scandales*, especially pp. 8-9.

created in the understanding of the scandalized, with no intention to cause scandal.[11] This distinction endured in Jean Calvin's two categories of 'scandale donné' and 'scandale pris' in his 1541 *Institutes of Christian Religion*; but his 1550 treatise *Des Scandales* substituted a tripartite division of occasions for scandal – the counter-intuitive difficulty of the gospel, heretical and false preaching, and malicious calumny against the reformed faithful.[12]

For the evangelical Marguerite de Navarre, the first of these scandals is the focus of recurring commentary. The scandal of the gospel – the fact that Christian doctrine itself may prove a stumbling block to those of weak faith – was of crucial importance in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, where he warns that the shame of the crucifixion would be a scandal to the world: 'nous prescho[n]s Christ crucifi[é] qui est certes scandale aux Juifz & folie aux gentilz' (1 Cor. 1:23). Guillaume Briçonnet, the evangelical bishop of Meaux and Marguerite de Navarre's spiritual adviser, describes the scandal of the cross in terms of the divine word taking on human nature and suffering 'sy griefve et ignominieuse mort', and in so doing constructing 'le bastiment incomprehensible, duquel les Juifz, ignorans la cause, ont esté scandalizés, et par les Gentilz imputé à follie, comme encores est à ceulx qui perissent'.[13] The 'bastiment incomprehensible' refers to the spiritual edifice of the church and the faithful, the building (or edification) of which represents a scandal to non-believers.

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[11] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 61 vols (London: Blackfriars, 1964-1981), vol. 35, 'Consequences of charity', trans. by Thomas R. Heath (1972), 'Scandal', 2a2ae q43, pp. 108-37.

[12] *Des Scandales*, pp. 64-127, 127-83, and 183-229; on the *Institutes*, see *Des Scandales*, 'Introduction', p. 25.

[13] Guillaume Briçonnet, Marguerite d'Angoulême, *Correspondance (1521-1524)*, ed. by Christine Martineau and Michel Veissière with Henry Heller, 2 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1975-1979), letter of 10 April 1524, vol. 2, p. 147.

In the New Testament, the scandal of the gospel is embodied in the person of Jesus – who promises 'bienheureux est celuy, qui ne sera point scandaliz[é] en moy' (Matt. 11:6) – through the repeated motif of the stone. In Jesus, the stumbling stone becomes the corner stone of the edifice of the church, remaining an offence to those who do not believe and therefore a touchstone of faith: 'Elle est donc honneur a vous qui croyez, mais a ceulx qui ne croyent point elle est la pierre que les edifians ont reprouu[é]: ceste est mise au chief de la[n]glet & pierre doffense & pierre de scandale a ceulx qui offendent contre la parolle' (1 Peter 2:7-8; see also Luke 20:17). These texts are reworkings of Old Testament passages where Jehovah appears in the paradoxical place of the scandal stone, both a promise and a threat: 'comme pierre dempeschement & comme pierre de scandale & co[m]me vng la[q]s aux deux maisons de Israel & en ruyne aux habitans de hierusalem' (Isaiah 8:13-14). These metaphors of the stone and of building are worked into complex configurations in Paul's New Testament letters in which the Romans and the Corinthians are exhorted to build up – to edify – the new Christian community. In a letter to Marguerite of 11 November 1521, Guillaume Briçonnet makes the association with edification explicit: '[Jesus] est la perle et pierre vive, precieuse, qui a esté reprouvée des hommes […] sur la solidité de laquelle les ames fidelles vivifiées en luy sont superediffiéez en mansions spirituelles pour offrir sacrifice spirituel agreable à Dieu'.[14]

The scandal of the gospel is closely linked in Paul and in the *Heptaméron* to the radical reversal of human hierarchies through the coming of Christ. In the *Heptaméron*, the

[14] The letter goes on, quoting 1 Peter 2 and Isaiah 28:16: 'De ceste perle vive, superceleste, avoit esté prophetisé: "Je mectz en syon la grant pierre angulaire, eslevée, precieuse: qui croiera en luy ne sera confondu"; et à nous qui croyons, nostre honneur, et aux infidelles sera pierre de offencion et de scandalle.' *Correspondance*, vol. 1, p. 55. See also Calvin, *Des Scandales*, p. 56.

principal stumbling stone and preeminent paradoxical teaching is the recurrent insistence on faith as sole justification, and the impotence of human beings to affect their own salvation without God's freely-given (gratuitous, and therefore potentially scandalous) grace. Repeatedly the storytellers tell tales of spectacular falls through the originary sin of pride, often compounded by that other Calvinist scandal, false teaching (in the *Heptaméron*, particularly by Franciscans), which encouraged a belief in the efficacy of good works and prayer.[15] In N30, a woman ends up sleeping with her son and having his child because of her failure (in the storyteller Hircan's words) to 'se humillier et recongnoistre l'impossibilité de nostre chair, qui sans l'ayde de Dieu ne peult faire que peché' (*Heptaméron*, p. 405). In N23, Oisille explains the tragic consequences of a wife's rape by a Franciscan – she commits suicide, suffocating her baby in the process – by her mistaken belief in Franciscan teaching of 'la confiance des bonnes œuvres', and her despair at ever being able to atone for her perceived sin (p. 348). Parlamente spells out the connection between this theology of humility and the identification of pride as the primary sin: 'il est impossible que la victoire de nous-mesmes se face par nous-mesmes, sans ung merveilleux orgueil qui est le vice que chacun doibt le plus craindre, car il s'engendre de la mort et ruyne de toutes les aultres vertuz' (p. 439). *Mort* and *ruyne* refer specifically to the threat of eternal damnation to the

[15] On the potential scandal of pride, see Gary Ferguson, 'Mal de vivre, mal croire: l'anticléricalisme dans *L'Heptaméron* de Marguerite de Navarre', *Seizième Siècle* 6 (2010), 151-63. On Marguerite's theology more generally, and the importance of *cuyder* particularly, see Carol Thysell, *The Pleasure of Discernment: Marguerite de Navarre as Theologian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). On evangelical criticisms of bad teaching, see Thierry Wanegffelen, *Une Difficile Fidélité: Catholiques malgré le concile en France, XVI^e^-XVII^e^ siècles* (Paris: PUF, 1999), pp. 40-1.

prideful soul with a vocabulary drawn from the register of scandal (Isaiah's 'ruyne aux habitans de hierusalem', the contrary of edification for Paul).

This insistence on the inefficacy of human actions is depicted in the *Heptaméron* as both an occasion and an explanation of sin. The deliberate humiliation of human arrogance is an affront to human pride and an occasion of stumbling; one of the most important New Testament scandal texts, the first letter to the Corinthians, is explicit that the humiliation of human wisdom is a stumbling stone for those who (like the Jews) look for signs and those who (like the Greeks) look for wisdom: 'Dieu ne a il pas fait la sapience de ce monde folle?' (1 Cor. 1:20), or in Parlamente's words, 'qui se cuyde saige est fol devant Dieu' (p. 466).[16] This provocative lesson is repeated throughout the *Heptaméron* by arrogant (Hircan) and humble (Nomerfide) alike. Each has their own agenda: Hircan's commentary after his N30 uses the teaching as a leveller of specifically female pride – 'celles qui cuydent par leurs forces et vertu vaincre amour et nature' (p. 408) – while Nomerfide argues that 'les folz' live longer because they are not constrained to dissimulate their passions (p. 434), building up the foolish and the naïve.

The narrative of scandal

The *Heptaméron* is ostensibly packed with scandalous stories. Adultery, pre-marital sex, rape, murder, and trickery are the sensational topics of many of the *nouvelles*, making them scandalous in another theoretical sense. In 'The Origin of Plot', Yuri Lotman identifies two basic types of plot: the plot of myth, archetypal, immemorial, and eternal; and the plot of

[16] Other storytellers repeat the same lesson: for example, Geburon (pp. 339-40) and Oisille (p. 107). See Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. by Betty Radice, *Collected Works of Erasmus* vol. 27 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 77-153. On this theme and scandal, see Pouey-Mounou, *Panurge comme lard en pois*, p. 66.

scandal, 'oral tales about "incidents," "news," various happy and unhappy excesses'.[17] The *nouvelle* is clearly a plot of scandal in this sense, since the rules laid down in the Prologue require it to be a true story of recent events; indeed, Lotman points out that 'early plots' were called 'novellas', or pieces of news.[18] At the end of the fifth day, Geburon describes the world we live in as one of anecdote and novelty where, because we have no access to divine truth, we will never be short of stories: 'tant que le monde dureroit, il se feroit cas dignes de memoire' (p. 547, where the 'cas' is close to the Latin *casus*, event or contingency).[19] Lotman elaborates the distinction between the plot of myth and the plot of news by their protagonists: 'Myth always speaks about me. "News," an anecdote, speaks about *somebody else*.'[20] The *nouvelles* in the *Heptaméron* are so insistently about somebody else that they suggest it would be unwise or dangerous to tell a story about oneself (as the protagonist in

[17] Jurij M. Lotman, 'The Origin of Plot in the Light of Typology', *Poetics Today* 1 (1979), 161-84 (p. 163).

[18] 'Prologue', pp. 90-1. The rules are reiterated at the point that they are broken, when Oisille recounts the Old French romance *La Chastelaine de Vergy* (p. 657). For an exploration of the resonance of 'news' in the *Heptaméron*, see Edwin M. Duval, '"Et puis, quelles nouvelles?": The Project of Marguerite's Unfinished Decameron', in *Critical Tales: New Studies of the 'Heptameron' and Early Modern Culture*, ed. by John D. Lyons and Mary B. McKinley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 241-62.

[19] On Geburon's remark, see Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, 'Rien nouveau sous le soleil', in *Marguerite de Navarre 1492-1992*, ed. by Nicole Cazauran and James Dauphiné (Editions Interuniversitaires, 1995), pp. 719-29; and André Tournon, '"Ignorans les premieres causes…": La nouvelle énigmatique', in *L'Heptaméron de Marguerite de Navarre*, ed. by Simone Perrier, *Cahiers Textuel* 10 (1992), 73-92.

[20] Lotman, 'The Origin of Plot', p. 163.

N62 finds out when she unwittingly does so); but the storytellers do discuss repeatedly the perceived relationship between the particular and the general, between the individual *nouvelle* and their understanding of their world. The men are more likely to generalize from particulars than the women, who tend to resist the conclusions about women's nature made by their companions. At one point, Oisille reminds Simontault and Hircan that 'Pour une qui n'est pas saige il ne fault pas que les autres soient estimées telles' (p. 256), suggesting that the men's readiness to generalize shares something of the contagious tug of scandal.[21]

Nouvelle 21, told at the beginning of the third day by Parlamente, is full of the material and vocabulary of scandal. This is the story of Rolandine, whose clandestine marriage to an illegitimate nobleman causes uproar and results in Rolandine being imprisoned in a tower by her father until her husband, who has proved unfaithful, conveniently dies, when she is married again to an honourable relative.[22] Early in the story, we are told that Rolandine lacks the support and protection of both her avaricious father and her malicious mistress, the queen, and this is why she has not been able to marry according to

[21] For other examples, see p. 229 (Oisille), p. 296 (Longarine), and p. 363 (Oisille).

[22] On N21, see António De Ridder-Vignone, 'Incoherent Texts? Storytelling, Preaching, and the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* in Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* 21', *Renaissance Quarterly* 68 (2015), 465-95; Carla Freccero, 'Rewriting the Rhetoric of Desire in the *Heptaméron*', in *Contending Kingdoms: Historical, Psychological, and Feminist Approaches to the Literature of Sixteenth-Century England and France*, ed. by Marie-Rose Logan and Peter Rudnytsky (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), pp. 298-312; Simone de Reyff, 'Rolandine, ou il n'y a pas d'amour heureux: Quelques remarques à propos de la 21e nouvelle de l'*Heptaméron*', *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance* 30 (1990), 23-35; Marc-André Wiesmann, 'Rolandine's *lict de reseul*: An Arachnological Reading of a Tale by Marguerite de Navarre', *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 31 (2000), 433-52.

her status. Ultimately, Rolandine's stubborn and counter-intuitive fidelity to her unfaithful husband gives her the moral capital necessary for an honourable marriage. We could read the story, then, as a New Testament scandal: the transformation of Rolandine's obstinacy from stumbling block to corner stone, as her fidelity to her husband changes from shame to honour.

The tale is full of obstacles placed in the path of Rolandine and her husband – scandals in Erasmus's sense of the *obstaculum* – and threatening their fall from grace: their letters are intercepted, there are spies everywhere, and traps (another etymological relative of scandal) are set for their messengers. Rolandine's husband uses a storybook of the Round Table as a cover in order to speak to his wife; the social scandal of an older man giving time to such fripperies leads to the discovery of his ruse. Before she contracts the marriage to the man who is referred to throughout as the 'bastard', Rolandine offends the court and draws its blame by speaking to him: 'chascun estoit scandalizé dont elle parloit tant à ung homme qui n'estoit assez riche pour l'espouser, ny assez beau pour estre amy' (p. 303). It is implied that there would be less of a scandal if he had been handsome enough to be a lover; what is inexplicable in Rolandine's speaking to him in the sexual economy of the court is its gratuity and pointlessness.[23] To be scandalized here is to be indignant and offended; scandal is experienced as an assault on behavioural norms and results in the perplexity of the court.[24] In Aquinas's terms, this must be a 'passive' scandal, one that is created in the affective reaction of the scandalized. It also reminds us of the fundamentally public nature of scandal: scandal needs an audience, it comes into being as a form of spectacle. Again, Aquinas draws a

[23] Other stories depict a 'scandalized' audience for any form of extra-marital affair: see for example N9 (p. 150) and N25 discussion (p. 371).

[24] On the legal and moral implications of perplexity in this period, see Stéphan Geonget, *La Notion de perplexité à la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2006).

distinction here with sin, which remains sin even if hidden; scandal, on the other hand, can arise from behaviour that only has the *appearance* of sin, or even – as seems to be Rolandine's case – an ostentatious performance of unorthodox behaviour. Rolandine herself believes that she has not offended God, but only people who care little for her honour and happiness ('en vous espousant, je n'offenseroye poinct Dieu', she says to her husband, p. 307): in refusing to allow the scandal to become an obstacle between herself and God, Rolandine turns scandal into a primarily social affair. In turn, the scandalized reaction is itself a performance, requiring a public display of indignation, outrage, loud whispers of condemnation, and demands for a change in reprimanded behaviour.

The court gets what it wants, and Rolandine is separated from the bastard for a time; the unintended consequences of this being that they both realize that they have fallen in love with each other, and contract their marriage by exchanging rings and a kiss in church 'devant Dieu' (p. 307). When their relationship is revealed – as it inevitably is – to the queen, she is furious, and reprimands Rolandine in front of the court for the dishonour that she has brought on her family. Rolandine, as one of a number of women in the *Heptaméron* who are not afraid to speak their minds (and are therefore potential scandals), confronts the queen with her disloyal behaviour and especially her uncharitable reprimand in the presence of others. The queen commits an active scandal in transgressing the rules of charitable correction in giving this public reprimand, because a public correction dishonours the recipient and makes their relapse into sin more likely once their good name is lost: it is thus properly scandalous behaviour, creating an obstacle deliberately in order to orchestrate a spiritual fall. Indeed, Gruget's edition provides an explicit condemnation of the queen's treatment of Rolandine's

relationship: ‘vous l’avez trop tost eventé, et faict sortir un scandale’.[25] Rolandine recognizes that ‘ceste correction devant plusieurs personnes ne procedoit pas d’amour qu’elle lui portast, mais pour luy faire une honte’ (p. 314). For Aquinas (and the tradition that followed), the virtuous opposite of scandal was fraternal correction, which should spring from charity (‘amour’), and be carried out between two people in order to avoid public dishonour (‘honte’); that is, to avoid slipping precisely into scandal.[26] In resisting the narrative of the queen, Rolandine refuses to be scandalized, and through her constancy turns shame into honour and edification – in both spiritual and material senses: ‘heritiere d’une bonne et grosse maison, où elle vesquit sainctement et honnorablement en l’amour de son mary’ (p. 323).

The question of fraternal correction arises again in connection to scandal early on Day 5 after Saffredent tells a story of another Franciscan, whose imposition of a bizarre physical penance on a young female confessant results in his public disciplining by the countess of Egmont (he is whipped in her kitchens). In the discussion that follows, Nomerfide wonders ‘si elle fit bien de scandaliser ainsy son prochain; et s’il eut pas myeulx vallu qu’elle luy eust remonstré ses faultes doulcement, que de divulguer ainsy son prochain’ (N41, p. 487).

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[25] *Heptaméron*, ed. Cazauran, p. 266; this variant also appears in the manuscript prepared by Adrien de Thou dated 1553: see *Heptaméron*, ed. by Michel François (Paris: Garnier, 1960), p. 468 n. 399.

[26] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ‘Scandal’, 2a2ae, q43, art. 3, p. 119. On fraternal correction, Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q33, vol. 34, trans. by R. J. Batten (1975), pp. 274-305. See Pouey-Mounou, *Panurge*, pp. 86-8. Jesus gives the blueprint for fraternal correction in Matthew 18, just after he has warned against the bringer of scandal: ‘sy ton frere a peche contre toy va & le reprens entre toy & luy seul. Sil tescoute tu auras gaign[é] to[n] frere’ (Matt. 18:15). In a letter to Marguerite of 31 August 1524, Briçonnet discusses the duty of private and gentle correction (*Correspondance*, vol. 2, p. 242).

Nomerfide is worried precisely about that intersection between fraternal correction and public scandal that Aquinas identified. Geburon agrees, pointing out that someone can be shamed so thoroughly that they become shameless, and beyond correction.[27] But Parlamente is clear, like Aquinas, that the rules are different for those who preach the gospel, 'car il ne fault poinct craindre à scandalizer ceulx qui scandalisent tout le monde'.[28] For Parlamente (as for many evangelicals and Protestants), the real scandal is, then, the corruption of the gospel by those tasked with its dissemination. Part of the impact of the stories in the *Heptaméron* is precisely to scandalize these scandalizers.

The scandal of narrative

If the *Heptaméron* deploys the narrative of scandal to various ends, it also suggests that narrative itself might be construed scandalous. Reading romances and novels was seen by sixteenth-century moralists as a potentially seductive and corrupting activity, particularly for women. [29] In the French translation of his influential 1603 emblem book *Iconologia*, Cesare

[27] Aquinas also warns of this potential consequence: 'once they see their good name gone they cast off all restraint'. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2ae 2ae 33 art. 7 (vol. 34, p. 299).

[28] Aquinas adds: 'where there is real danger to the faith, subjects must rebuke their superiors even publicly' (2ae2ae33.4, p. 289).

[29] Juan-Luis Vives provides a list of particularly dangerous books for women in his 1524 *De institutione fœminæ Christianæ*. Referring to a New Testament scandal text, he argues in Pierre de Changy's French translation: 'Mieulx seroit n'auoir aprins letre: mais auec ce auoir perdu les yeulx, & aureilles, que les lire, & ouyr. Dit l'Euangile, que mieulx est, aueugle, & sourd, aller en Paradis, qu'auec integrité de corps succumber aux enfers' (Loys Vives, *Institution de la femme chrestienne*, trans. by Pierre de Changy (Paris: Denys Janot pour Galiot du Pré, 1545), p. 18^{r}. Matthew and Mark both report this warning, and in Matthew it is

Ripa focuses particularly on romances as an accoutrement of Scandal, depicted as an old man carrying playing cards in one hand and a stringed instrument in the other, with printed books at his feet. The accompanying text focuses entirely on leisure pursuits: 'Le Luth, & les Cartes qu'elle [*sic*] tient; ensemble les Romans & les Amadis, qui se voyent à ses pieds, signifient que c'est vne chose scandaleuse de voir qu'vn homme d'âge s'amuse à ces galanteries'.[30] The curious slippage from masculine ('Le Scandale') to feminine ('elle') pronoun suggests that scandal is indeed more strongly associated with women, as Oisille's particular concern for the 'pauvres femmelettes' also implied. But rather than focusing on the spiritual consequences of such activities, Ripa's text represents the scandalous spectacle of inappropriate behaviour. Like Rolandine's bastard, a man no longer young raises suspicion and condemnation when he occupies himself with romances (and music and gambling). The force of the scandal here doesn't seem so much theological as social, an offence against decorum, where the individual risks ridicule for unseemly behaviour. The early-seventeenth-century printing of the *Iconologia* may explain this focus, as the field of scandal became increasingly secular during the second half of the sixteenth century.[31]

If etymologically a scandal is a snare, and theologically it is a stumbling block and a seduction, how might a story embody scandal rather than simply recounting it? Calvin argues in *Des Scandales* that Catholic preaching practices adopt a kind of rhetorical circumlocution

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explicitly part of a discussion of scandal: 'malheur à l'home, par lequel sca[n]dale aduient. Et sy ta main ou ton pied te sca[n]dalize coupe le & le iette de toy: car mieulx te vault entrer manchot ou boiteux en la vie: q[ue] auoit deux mai[n]s ou deux piedz & estre iett[é] au feu eternel' (Matt. 18, 7-8).

[30] Cesare Ripa, *Iconologie* trans. by Jean Baudouin (Paris: Mathieu Guillemot, 1644; reprinted New York: Garland, 1976), pp. 169 (image p. 168).

[31] See Butterworth and Tomlinson, 'Scandal'.

that endlessly leads the congregation away from God's truth: 'pour faire tourner les hommes alentour du pot et les amuser à des menuz bagages, à ce qu'ils ne viennent point droict à Dieu'.[32] Implied here is a certain technique of distraction and elaboration that 'faict esgarer', that turns its listeners from the true path. For Calvin, Catholic wordiness contrasts with the gospels' simple, unadorned style, the rhetorical poverty of which constitutes another potential scandal. Similarly, the *Heptaméron* rejects embellishment as an obstacle to truth in the Prologue, declaring polemically that *nouvelles* – everyday, recent, reliable tales – are rigorously anti-rhetorical.[33]

The *nouvelles* in the *Heptaméron* could, however, be described as narrative traps: like the New Testament parables in David McCracken's study of biblical scandal, they seem designed to reveal the desires of their tellers and hearers.[34] The storytellers' reactions to the tale (N13) of an honourable woman who sends a priceless diamond to her admirer's wife are touchstones of their character: Parlamente praises her good sense; Nomerfide vows she would

[32] Calvin, *Des Scandales*, pp. 132-3. Randle Cotgrave gives this translation of *aller à l'entour du pot*: 'by circuit of words to insinuate that which one dares not plainely deliuer'. *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1950 [1611]), art. 'pot'. But for Calvin, of course, Catholic practice deliberately *avoids* the point, or defers it indefinitely.

[33] Calvin, *Des Scandales*, pp. 64-7. The *Heptaméron* ostensibly eschews eloquence 'de paour que la beaulté de la rethoricque feit tort en quelque partye à la verité de l'histoire' (p. 90). On the scandal of the gospel's plain style and of false preaching, see Catharine Randall, *Earthly Treasures: Material Culture and Metaphysics in the 'Heptaméron' and Evangelical Narrative* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2007), pp. 258-73.

[34] David McCracken, *The Scandal of the Gospels: Jesus, Story, and Offense* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 76.

never have given up so valuable a present; Hircan simply doesn't believe a woman could resist avarice in such a way, and concludes that she must have been driven by pride; Ennasuitte thinks there would be no harm in keeping it, as long as no-one knew; Geburon rejects Ennasuitte's position as morally bankrupt; and Saffredent condemns her as irredeemably foolish (pp. 229-30). Hircan's disbelief in the heroine's motivation in N13 might constitute another indignant reaction to the scandal of narrative, when certain details prove a stumbling block for the credulity of certain storytellers, and prevent their benefiting from the tale – in other words, prevent their edification.[35]

René Girard depicts biblical scandal as fascinating, dangerously seductive, and violent, and there are elements of this, too, in the storytelling enterprise that no-one wants to end.[36] In reporting the scandalous *nouvelle* 11, Henri Estienne refrains from soiling his page ('souiller ce papier') with the precise words of the lewd Franciscan; but he tells his readers precisely where they can find the story, acknowledging the attraction of scandal for the 'curieux'.[37] Girard's term for the process scandal inaugurates is 'le désir mimétique' – an antagonistic and rivalrous emulation that results in an infinite cycle of violence (p. 439). 'Le *skandalon*, c'est le désir lui-même, toujours plus obsédé par les obstacles qu'il suscite, et les multipliant autour de lui' (p. 439). In the *Heptaméron*, this scandalous paradox of desire growing in proportion to resistance and to the desire of others is figured as peculiarly masculine. Hircan – described by Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani in her introduction as 'le scandaleux' (p. 44) – in particular is led to imagine his own violent desires by the narrative of rape or near-violation. In one particularly striking example, he criticizes the protagonist of

[35] For other examples, see p. 363 (Nomerfide), and p. 499 (Hircan again).

[36] René Girard, *Des Choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde: Recherches avec J.-M. Oughourlian et Guy Lefort* (Paris: Grasset, 1978), pp. 438-53.

[37] Estienne, *Traité preparatif*, vol. 1, p. 544.

N59 for not having raped a chambermaid in the presence of his wife.[38] When Parlamente protests, he admits the potentially scandalous nature of the position he has just advocated: 'Je suys seur, Parlamente, que je ne scandalize poinct l'innocent devant qui je parle, et si ne veulx, par cela, soustenir ung mauvais faict' (p. 603). Despite his reference to the gospel, Hircan's position is entirely contrary to that of Jesus, who warns in Matthew and Luke that 'Il luy est plus expedient que vne pierre de moulin luy soit mise autour de son col & quil soit iett[é] en la mer: que de scandaliser vng diceulx petis.'[39] Paul gives similar advice to the Corinthians when he urges them to respect dietary habits and taboos; for although food itself is insignificant under the new law, the affront to entrenched habits and beliefs might cause the weak to lose faith (1Cor. 8, especially 8-9). Hircan's unwillingness to 'soustenir un mauvais faict' privileges his own sense of right over the sensibilities of his listeners, and his intransigence represents a stumbling stone that Parlamente chooses to ignore: 'de ce que je n'ay poinct sceu, n'en ay-je poinct voulu doubter ny encores moins m'en enquerir' (p. 604).

Nouvelles are told in order to make a point, in response to perceived slights, or to correct a mistaken or prejudiced perspective. Repeatedly, a storyteller promises to 'reparer la faulte' of the previous speaker, whose story was too cruel, too serious, too close to the bone.[40]

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[38] Other examples: after N25, he admits to having confessed without repentance (p. 371); and after N38, he invents a Franciscan lover for the virtuous wife to explain her extreme devotion to her husband, and is accused by Oisille of bad judgement and malice (p. 465).

[39] Luke 17:1 (p. 27^{v}); see also Matt. 18:6. In its excessive and vindictive violence, the millstone around the neck is another instance of the scandal of the gospel. On the scandal of the little ones (*scandalum pusillorum*), see Aquinas, *Summa*, 2ae 2ae 43 art. 7.

[40] We have already seen an example of this in Gruget's apocryphal N11, where Simontault makes Nomerfide share the blame; other examples happen after N3 (Oisille, p. 108), N11 (Nomerfide, p. 202), N20 (Saffredent, p. 300) and N22 (Geburon, p. 341). On the storytellers'

Nouvelles are also used as ammunition in the storytellers' own personal conflicts. In what amounts to an active scandal, Longarine deliberately accuses Hircan and Saffredent after her N8 of adultery and threatens them with punishment similar to that in the story. Geburon reprimands her: 'en lieu de faire rire la compaignye, comme vous aviez promis, mectez ces deux pauvres gens en collere' (p. 146). Anger – the affective reaction of the scandalized – is here opposed to the laughter that Longarine had promised to deliver. Hircan complains that if their wives believe her, 'elle brouilleroit le meilleur mesnaige qui soyt en la compaignye' – that scandal promotes and exacerbates divisions is precisely what Paul warns against in his first letter to the Corinthians.[41] Ultimately, Longarine's sally does make the group laugh so much that they are unable to continue the skirmish. As Antónia Szabari argues in her work on Rabelais, laughter can provide an effective solvent for the indignation of scandal, at least at this point; the protagonist of N62 experiences a different kind of laughter when her audience highlights and perhaps creates the scandal by laughing at her slip of the tongue.[42]

The very first *nouvelle* relates a scandalous story that also embodies the scandal of narrative. Narrated by Simontault, who uses his first-speaker privilege to decree that the first day's stories will recount women's cruelty to men as a kind of vengeance on his own object of desire, Parlamente, N1 is a story of depravity, murder, and sorcery. A woman of Alençon has two lovers, a bishop for his influence and a young man for his beauty; when the latter

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manipulation of their tales, see André Tournon, 'The Rules of the Game', in *Critical Tales*, ed. Lyons and McKinley, pp. 188-99.

[41] See 1Cor. 1:12-13.

[42] Antónia Szabari, *Less Rightly Said: Scandals and Readers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 64; see also her 'The Way of Imperfection: Laughter and Mysticism in Marguerite de Navarre's *L'Heptaméron*', *French Forum* 33:3 (Fall 2008), 1-16.

discovers that he is not unique, she goads her husband into having him murdered; condemned for the crime, and as a last resort, when royal clemency seems impossible, the husband employs a necromancer to make wax images of his wife and the Duchess of Alençon – that is, Marguerite herself. The narrative of the lover's murder mimics the choreography of scandal, as he is lured into a trap without his servants, stabbed and flung down the stairs, his body burned and his bones mixed with the mortar being used in the foundations of the house.[43] The trap and the fall resonate with the vocabulary of scandal; the half-finished foundations recall the biblical metaphor of the edifice of God's house where stumbling stone becomes corner stone only for the faithful. The faithless couple attempt to construct their own version of events, using the techniques of scandal: they attempt to discredit the witnesses, tricking a young chambermaid into a Parisian brothel, 'affin qu'elle ne fust plus creue en tesmoignage' (p. 99). But the story is told, and the scandal emerges: in the end, it is the wife who starts the sequence of storytelling that terminates in N1: she tells ('va compter', p. 101) her uncle, who in his turn tells ('racompta') the chancellor of Alençon. As in N62, telling the story effectively creates scandal, providing the element of publicity that scandal needs; and the storytelling chain repeats the contagious spread of the scandal that it initiates.

In his 1880 edition of the *Heptaméron*, Antoine Le Roux de Lincy published the 1526 letter of remission he discovered in the Archives nationales that features in the story.[44] Sent

[43] In a brief but suggestive reading of this *nouvelle*, Catherine Randall also deploys the vocabulary of scandal: 'Bodies lie buried at the base of buildings that, designed by evil intentions and scaffolded upon ruin, recall the holocaust of the sinful heart.' *Earthly Treasures*, p. 14.

[44] *L'Heptaméron des nouvelles*, ed. by Le Roux de Lincy and Anatole de Montaiglon, 4 vols (Paris: Auguste Eudes, 1880), vol. 4, pp. 214-17. See Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the*

by the husband, Saint-Aignan, to François I after the murder, in the *nouvelle* the request is unsuccessful thanks to the intervention of the duke and duchess of Alençon, and he and his wife flee to England. The letter of remission published by Le Roux de Lincy returns insistently to the matter of scandal. Dumesnil, as the lover is referred to in the letter, is depicted as an unscrupulous seducer, who suborns a chambermaid in order to gain access to the wife; Saint-Aignan feels he must act, 'voyant sad[ite] femme ainsi scandalizée par led[it] Dumesnil' (p. 215); once the murder is committed, 'congnoissant le scandalle advenu' (p. 216), he allows the body to be buried 'pour eviter scandalle' (p. 217). In the letter of remission, fear of scandal is the extenuating circumstance; the occasion that explains Saint-Aignan's actions; the glue, perhaps, that binds his story together. In the *nouvelle*, in contrast, scandal is something that is wielded by the diabolical husband and wife in their attempt to exonerate themselves. Natalie Zemon Davis has argued that letters of remission play with the same narrative techniques as the short stories that were being developed in France in the early sixteenth century; here we can see the *Heptaméron*'s critique of Saint-Aignan's attempts to manipulate the techniques of scandal for his own ends by depicting them precisely as manipulation.[45] Rather than surrendering to scandal and its affective regime of fear, anger, and indignation, N1 emphasizes the justice and charity of the duchess's intervention. This intervention means that instead of being executed, Saint-Aignan and the magician are sent to the galleys in perpetuity, where they have the 'loisir de recongnoistre la gravité de leurs pechez' (p. 102), suggesting a possible end to the cycle of violence; his wife is allowed to live in comparable impunity, although 'miserablement'.

Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), pp. 58-9.

[45] *Fiction in the Archives*, pp. 2-4.

This discussion of scandal as trap, stumbling block, and indignation might help to unpick one of the most enigmatic comments on scandal in the *Heptaméron* – Oisille's declaration after N25 that 'le scandalle est souvent pire que le peché' (p. 371). This is remarkable because the *nouvelle* has been a playful and ultimately non-judgemental anecdote about adultery and religious hypocrisy in which a young and handsome prince (who is obviously François I) uses a monastery as cover for his adulterous liaison. The prior who makes precisely the same argument in N72 to assure a nun that two unmarried people cannot offend God 'quant il n'en vient poinct de scandalle' (p. 693) is roundly condemned. Perhaps François's charisma seduces even the old widow Oisille, who praises the prince's care of his lover's reputation; Geburon starts this hare, declaring that 'l'on veoit peu de grans seigneurs qui se soulcient de l'honneur des femmes, ny du scandalle public, mais qu'ilz aient leur plaisir' (p. 371). But perhaps Oisille is not thinking in particular about this case, but more generally about the harm scandal can do in the community – its offensiveness, contagion, fascination, and potential damnation of the scandalized soul. Scandal magnifies the scope of sin and pulls the whole community into its reach. The act of storytelling in the *Heptaméron* illustrates how this may happen, as the *nouvelles* both narrate scandal and are potential scandals themselves. In Girard's terms, scandal is a relationship of doubles who mutually reinforce its dissemination: 'la distinction entre l'être scandaleux et l'être scandalisé tend toujours à s'abolir; c'est le scandalisé qui répand le scandale autour de lui'.[46] Paul sees this relationship of doubles in terms of the mutual dependence in the nascent church (and Calvin had it as an epigram on the title page of *Des Scandales*): 'Qui est en infirmit[é] que ie nen soye point debilit[é]? Qui est scandaliz[é] que ie nen soye point enflamb[é]?' (2 Cor. 11:29). In tracing the affective contagion of scandal – indignation or desire – the *Heptaméron* also emphasizes its capacity for dissemination and its communal impact, and represents the

[46] Girard, *Des Choses cachées*, p. 441.

complicity of storytelling in the spread and reach of scandal. Characteristically, it explores these repercussions in both theological and secular fields, on both the salvation of the storytellers' souls and the preservation of their good name.[47]

[47] Many critics have explored the dialogue between the theological and the secular in the *Heptaméron*; see, for example, Lucien Febvre, *Autour de l''Heptaméron': Amour sacré, amour profane* (Paris: Gallimard, 1944).